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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that used discourse analysis to explore the relationship of power and involvement to experience in supervisory conferences are presented in this paper. Based on Penman's (1980) content analysis scheme, conference talk between supervisors and teachers was analyzed according to manifest and latent levels of communication that indicated power and involvement. Data were derived from video and audio tapes of five teacher/supervisor conferences and interviews with participants. Findings indicate that much communication about power and involvement was implicitly rather than explicitly expressed. Patterns of teacher/supervisor interaction reflected characteristics of power and involvement, varying supervisory styles, and different patterns that were influenced by supervisor experience. Eight figures and two tables are included. (Contains 37 references.) (LMI)

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF POWER AND INVOLVEMENT TO EXPERIENCE IN SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SUPERVISOR STYLE

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ABSTRACT

This is a report of a study of the discourse of five instructional supervisory conferences from the perspective of manifest and latent levels of communication with regard to power and involvement by the supervisor and teacher. A transcribed database was analyzed using a content-analysis scheme and a structural and pragmatic perspective. This provided a functional analysis, as opposed to a topical analysis, of the sequences of verbal messages contained in the conferences. The results indicated that patterns of supervisor-teacher interaction reflect characteristics of power and involvement, varying styles for supervisors, and varying patterns discernible by supervisor experience.

The Relationship of Power and Involvement to Experience in Supervisory Conference: Discourse Analysis of Supervisor Style

Theoretical Framework

While several theorists have promoted collaborative and problem-solving approaches to instructional conferring (Blumberg & Weber, 1968; Acheson & Gall, 1987; Garman, 1982), the dimensions of power and involvement are infrequently-discussed components of the supervisory relationship. In addition, examination of related theoretical constructs (Abadie, 1985; Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987; Holloway, Freund, Gardner, Nelson, & Walker, 1989) and research (Friedlander & Ward, 1984) from other fields suggests that an integration of power and involvement dimensions characterizes the style or orientation of the supervisor.

Recent research on the instructional supervisory conference between a supervisor/administrator and a teacher has highlighted the nature and significance of its verbal discourse (Holland, Veal, Clift, & Johnson, 1991; Roberts, 1991, 1992; Waite, 1990). Related research with student teachers has shown that instructional supervisory conferences are dominated by supervisors and encompass narrow concerns (Zimpher, deVoss, and Nott, 1980), and provide only short, prescriptive feedback for teachers (Blumberg & Cusick, 1970). Teacher response to supervisor prescriptions has been characterized by defensiveness, compliance, and a lack of reflection or self-evaluation (Zeichner & Liston, 1985; Gitlin, Ogawa, & Rose, 1984). Extant studies on conferring strategies ignore altogether the issues of power and

control conferred on the supervisor (Holland, 1989). Further, we do not know if the picture is different when experienced supervisors or experienced teachers are involved. In order to expand the study of what supervisors do, what teachers prefer, and the relative effectiveness of different supervisory techniques, the current study used observational methodologies to examine the complex process of interactive decision making (Erickson, 1986) in the supervisory conference. Of further interest to the researcher was the concept of "social cognition," or the supervisor's knowledge about the affective context of social interaction (Shantz, 1975).

The Research Problem and Procedures

In order to closely examine the nature of interpersonal communication in the discourse of supervisors and teachers, conference talk was analyzed with regard to power and involvement.

Penman's (1980) content-analysis scheme, which includes both manifest (surface description of the message based on the information in the explicit report) and latent (representing deeper structures depending on the information in the context) levels of communication, and which is organized on the two dimensions of power and involvement, was selected for the analysis (see Figures 1, 2, and 3). This classification system recognizes verbal speech acts including paralinguistic and extralinguistic behaviors. Speaker intent as suggested by

speech-act theory (Searle, 1969) formed the interpretation of messages.

The frequency and proportion for message units were calculated for each speaker (novice, beginner, experienced, and postulant supervisors; new and experienced teachers) in each of the five dyads, and incidence of discrepancies between manifest and latent levels of communication was determined. Categories of analysis included, for example, aggress, advise, support, disagree, exchange, avoid, request, and concede (for the manifest level); control, reject, collaborate, relinquish, evade, oblige, and seek (for the latent level).

Categories of the Manifest and Latent Level Schemes

Mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories denoting illocutionary acts which are also consistent within the frame of the two interpersonal dimensions of power and involvement (Penman, 1980) were defined for both the Manifest and Latent Level Schemes.

On the Manifest Level Scheme, three positions on the abscissa define negative-to-positive levels of the dimension of involvement, and three positions on the ordinate define low-to-high power. Thus, aggress represents high power and negative (still involved, but in a negative way) involvement. In a conventional sense, the illocutionary meaning of the conference message units was determined, per Searle's (1969) and Austin's (1962) notions regarding analytic connections between acts,

meanings, and intentions. It was furthermore assumed (i.e., Shotter, 1978) that speakers are acting intentionally.

On the Latent Level Scheme, classification is more complex, with four positions allowing for greater discrimination on the abscissa and ordinate. This level allows interpretations of the dynamics of underlying messages, including context, implicit information, and meta-information (Framo, 1965). Points of intersection of the two dimensions, power and involvement, are defined on the ordinate in terms of psychological meaning; and the 16 interpersonal behaviors categories are based on synthesis of theories in clinical psychology (Penman, 1980). For example, joining with another (being involved) while sustaining that person's power is "collaborate," and separating and ignoring his/her power is "evade."

Together, the two classification schemes can be integrated to form a conceptual whole, "two planes in the same dimensional space." Thus, the domain of one manifest category is superimposed on and overlaps the domain of four latent categories. Using the terminology of the coding manual, Penman (1980) illustrates the differences in classification at the two levels in the following exchange:

> Male: Well, I think trust may be very important.
>
> Female: Well, what do you mean by trust here?
>
> At the manifest level, the male is giving personal information of a "public" nature, but the information is also of a tentative nature, being one of many alternatives; therefore it is coded as an "Exchange". In response, the female is asking for clarification or expansion of this statement; therefore it is also coded as an "Exchange". At the latent level the male is seen as offering a tentative proposal to the other with the intent of further exploring the current relation but without full commitment; therefore it is coded as

an "Offer". In response the female is showing unwillingness to accept what the other is saying, with the apparent intent of blocking the other to avoid commitment; therefore it is coded as a "Resist".

To further illustrate this dual level classification, let us look at the next steps in the above conversation.

		Manifest	Latent
Male:	You're not at work now, you know!	Aggress	Reject
Female:	OK, but what do you mean?	Exchange	Counter*
Male:	Well, trusting each other/ No, let's do it the other way, what do you mean by trust?	Exchange/ Advise	Submit/* Control
Female:	But, that's what I'm asking you.	Disagree	Resist

Summarizing the whole extract, it can be seen that after a manifestly aggressive message by the male, both the female and then the male manifestly revert to a more "neutral" Exchange. However, at the latent level, the female continues her defence and the male initially submits to it. Then the conflict is readmitted to the manifest level again. (pp. 68-69).

Note the (asterisked) incongruent acts, moving from manifest exchange to latent counter (equal power, less involvement) and then from manifest exchange to latent submit (decrease in power). The eight possible incongruencies and one possible congruency between manifest and latent levels may be identified:

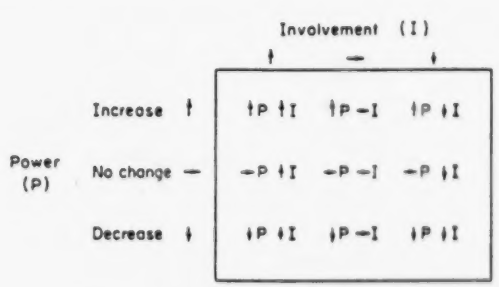


Fig. 4. The eight possible incongruencies and one possible congruency between manifest and latent levels.

Figure reprinted by permission from Robyn Penman (1980). Communication nprocesses and relationships. London: Academic Press (p. 69).

In the following section a description of the questions, data base, and the method of application of the classification scheme are presented.

QUESTIONS AND METHOD

This manuscript is a report of one part of a larger concurrent study conducted in southwestern and southern public school districts. The findings presented here constitute an analysis of the interaction performance of instructional supervisors as they conducted postobservation conferences with teachers. Using a multiple-case-study approach, the following questions were addressed:

- What are the proportions of manifest and latent level interaction behaviors for supervisors and teachers?
- What discrepancies between the levels exist for conference participants?
- Are there distinguishable styles of supervisor behavior in conference as defined by experience?

Selection of the supervisors was based on a preliminary analysis of data from two protocols, including supervisors' written reports documenting case backgrounds and interpretations, and transcripts of video- and audiotapes of conferences. In several cases the database (taped conference observations and documents) was supplemented by interviews to clarify significant points and ensure a broad base of representation by experience and gender within the sample. To test the application of the Penman (1980) content-analysis scheme to conference participants'

behavior regarding power and involvement, the documents and transcripts were searched for specific speech acts focused on the teacher's improvement of instruction, considered the critical transitions or critical events (for example, committing to a course of action for instructional improvement, identifying an instructional problem, or describing alternative courses of action for teachers) in instructional supervisory conferences.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data indicates that much of what occurs regarding power and involvement in the instructional conference is implicit, rather than explicit. This is reflected in (a) the teacher's use of the manifest level of power relative to the supervisor's use of the latent level of power, (b) the proportion of categories in contrast to other conferences, (c) the identification of discrepancies in routines at manifest levels, (d) varying incidence of reciprocity or congruence of patterns, and (e) distinguishable styles of supervision at the manifest and latent levels of power and involvement.

Findings

The five supervisors (including one postulant from another field, one novice, two beginners, and one veteran) and teachers formed mixed gender (M/F, F/M, M/M, F/F) dyads for supervisory conferences based on analyses of actual classroom observations.

For twenty-six significant or critical transitions found in the five supervisory conferences, the shift of power and involvement from antecedent to subsequent message was examined. For example, if the supervisor's message was advise and the teacher's subsequent message was agree this represented an increase in involvement and a decrease in power between the participants. (See Table 1)

Behavior at the Manifest Level

Results indicate that the highest proportion of categories for supervisors were exchange and support; for teachers, agree and exchange had the highest incidence. Beyond the neutral exchange area, participants tended to remain in the medium to high involvement and power ranges, with teachers' behaviors more predominant in the high involvement area and supervisors' behaviors more predominant in the high power categories (see Table 2).

Behavior at the Latent Level

Much more diversity and range of categories was evident at the latent level. Supervisors' use of the categories offer, oblige, and seek were more prevalent; teachers' use of offer, submit and counter were moderately evident. Supervisors dominated in the use of higher-power categories, notably in the category offer; yet supervisors' power is often matched with higher-involvement messages (i.e., collaborate, seek, share). Teachers also tended to operate in the neutral area of offer or

the high involvement areas of collaborate and oblige. Only one participant used very low-involvement (and high-power) messages.

Discrepancies Between Levels

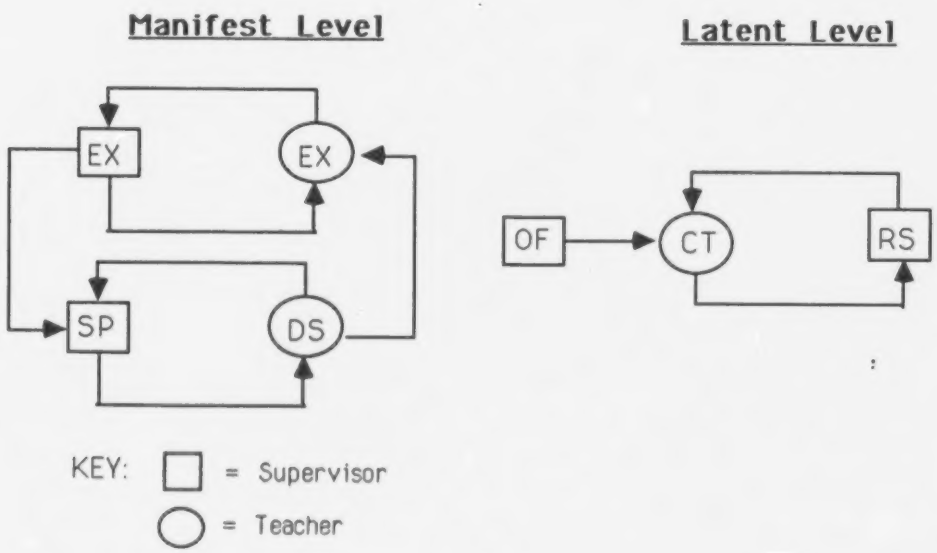
Both supervisors and teachers exhibited high consistency between manifest and latent levels. For all conferences, only three messages demonstrated discrepancies between these levels. Daryl's conference included one support message which, at the latent level, was oblige, representing lower power and equal involvement (↓ P → I). The teacher in the novice supervisor, Jenny's, conference, twice gave manifest exchange messages which were counters at the latent level (→ P ↓ I), thus diminishing involvement.

Supervisor Styles

Characteristics unique to each supervisor-supervisee pair were noted. Jenny's blatantly negative conference was least similar to all other conferences, with both participants reaching high power and low involvement levels. The two beginners, Daryl and Wanda, were dissimilar primarily in the level of collaboration (versus evading or submitting) attained. Wanda and Denise, the veteran, both appeared more open and equalitarian, with frequent exchange and agree messages (latently reflecting oblige, seek, and collaborate messages) to which the teachers responded positively.

An interesting pattern emerged regarding the difference between Jenny's (and the teacher's) manifest and latent levels; this discrepancy is reflected in the following routines, and

suggests the critical influence of such behaviors. At the manifest level, the cycle of exchanges alternates with occasional disagreement by the teacher, while latently the teacher's counters are met by the supervisor's resistance. Thus, the vicious cycle perpetuates itself.



In sum, supervisor style in the five case studies appears to be roughly discernible along the lines of experience, with what occurs regarding power and involvement in the interaction being, at times, more implicit than explicit.

Theoretical and Practical Significance

Cicourel (1964, 1974, 1982) and others have eloquently demonstrated that the success of social-scientific research depends on an awareness of the ways in which groups use language. This includes research on the ethnography of communication (Gumperz, 1972; Hymes, 1964), quantitative studies of linguistic variation (Labov, 1972), the study of the macrosociology of

language (Cicourel, 1964), and discussion about contrasting views on methodological issues (Briggs, 1986). Austin's (1962) work stimulated much research on the dynamics of linguistic features as related to interactional patterns, but the linkages between linguists and practitioners in education has until recently been limited to classroom interaction (e.g., Hymes, 1982; Green & Harker, 1988). Little research exists on the phenomenon of supervisor-teacher conference, even less on linguistic and communication dimensions of such discourse (Holland, 1989; Roberts, 1990).

Practically speaking, acquiring metacommunicative competence, understanding maxims of conversation, and avoiding communication blunders appear to be critical skills of instructional supervisors. In the current study, one respondent were found to have but one means of subverting the supervisors' power: breaking the frame of the conversation.

There exist few explicit theoretical orientations within the literature on the varieties of supervisory practice -- most approaches appear to be rooted in paradigms reflecting the perspectives of positivism, phenomenology, and critical theory (May & Zimpher, 1986). From the perspective of relevant supervision and communication literature this study offers some general insights. For example, the structure of the working relationship in instructional supervision lends itself to functional analysis. In addition, analysis of the dynamics of supervisory relationships as conducted by supervisors of varying levels of experience reveals measurable commonalities, yet differences, in the role of supervisor.

Considered in concert with recent related research, these findings form a heuristic for the specific study of the critical supervisory element of conferring with teachers; confirm the need to make power structures "explicit, criticized, justified, and rearranged" (Cherryholmes, 1988); confirm Hymes' (1971) concept of sociolinguistic competence; present descriptive, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks regarding the relationship between supervisor and teacher; raise questions about the purpose and educational value of a clinical conference which promises collegiality and growth but withholds these by virtue of the politics of practice (St. Maurice, 1987); and suggest the importance of additional and significant numbers of studies about supervisory-conference discourse and its linkage to larger social systems.

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INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR SCHEMES

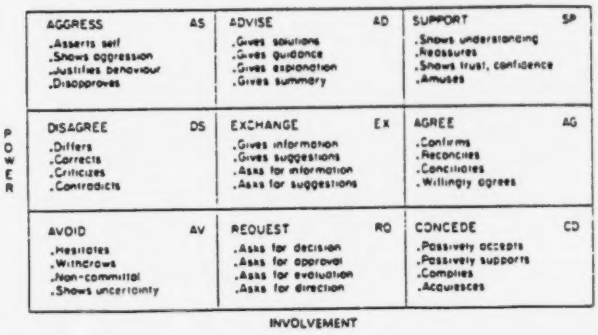

Fig. 1. Summary of manifest level classification scheme

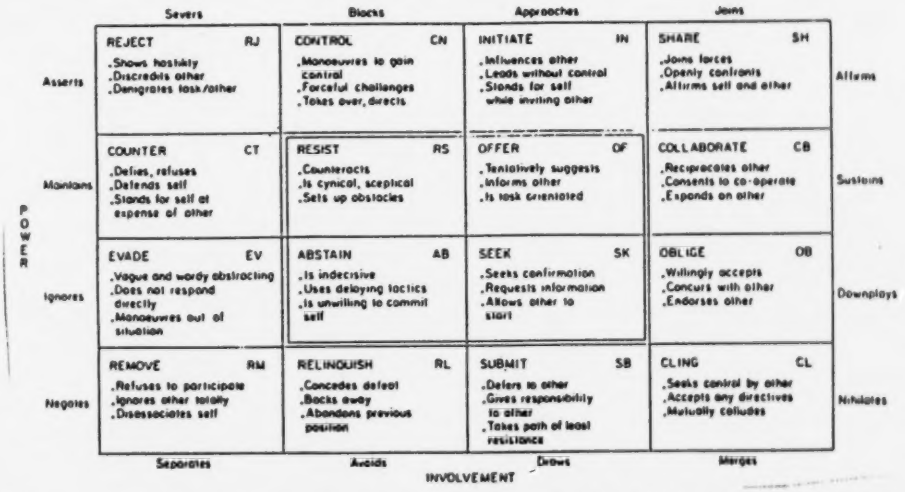

Figure 2. Summary of latent level classification scheme.

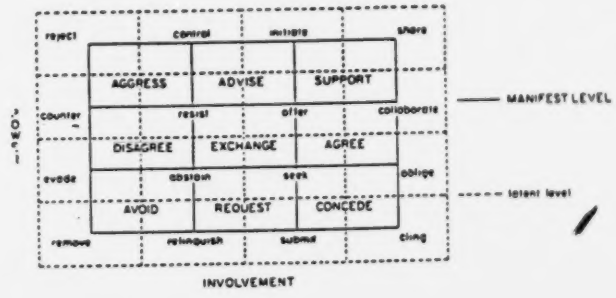

Fig. 3. Integrated manifest and latent level schemes.

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Table 1. Power and Involvement Shifts During Critical Transitions/ Events in Selected Instructional Supervisory Conferences

	Supervisor Name, Participants' Genders, Supervisor Experience Level*				
Supervisor-Teacher Power & Involvement Shift to:	Charles M/F Postulant	Jenny F/M Novice	Daryl M/M Beginner	Wanda F/F Beginner	Denise F/F Veteran
Manifest Level					
+P -I	CD-EX	EX-AS			CD-EX
+P =I					
+P +I					
=P -I			EX-DS		
=P =I	EX-EX	EX-EX(2)		EX-EX	EX-EX AG-AG
=P +I				EX-AG(2)	EX-AG
-P -I		SP-DS	EX-AV		
-P =I	SP-AG		SP-DS(3)	SP-AG(2)	
-P +I			AD-CD(4)		AD-AG
Latent Level					
+P -I	OB-OF	RS-RJ	OB-RS(3)		OB-OF
+P =I	SK-OF				SK-OF
+P +I					
=P -I		RS-CT OF-CT	OF-CT		
=P =I				CB-CB SK-SK	
=P +I				OF-CB SK-OB	SK-OB
-P -I		SH-CT	OF-EV		
-P =I	SH-OB		OF-SB(4)	SH-CB	CB-OB
-P +I					IN-OB

Key
P (power)
I (involvement)
+ more
- less
= same

Manifest Level Codes
AS - Aggress
AD - Advise
SP - Support
DS - Disagree
EX - Exchange
AG - Agree
AV - Avoid
RQ - Request
CD - Concede

Latent Level Codes
RJ - Reject
CN - Control
IN - Initiate
SH - Share
CT - Counter
RS - Resist
OF - Offer
CB - Collaborate
EV - Evade

AB - Abstain
SK - Seek
OB - Oblige
RM - Remove
RL - Relinquish
SB - Submit
CL - Cling

*experienced: 2nd year in supervision
beginner: 1st year in supervision
novice: first experience in supervision
postulant: from another field, first year

Table 2. Frequencies of Manifest and Latent Power and Involvement Messages of Supervisors and Teachers in Instructional Supervisory Conferences

	Supervisor Behaviors	F	Teacher Behaviors	F
Manifest Level	exchange	11	agree	8
	support	7	exchange	7
	advise	5	disagree	5
	concede	2	concede	4
	agree	1	aggress	1
			avoid	1
	TOTAL	26		
			TOTAL	26
	Supervisor Behaviors		Teacher Behaviors	
Latent Level	offer	8	oblige	5
	oblige	5	offer	4
	seek	5	submit	4
	share	3	counter	4
	resist	2	collaborate	3
	collaborate	2	resist	3
	initiate	1	seek	1
			evade	1
	TOTAL	26	reject	1
			TOTAL	26